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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 19, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM LATHAM to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Reverend Pete Wall, Pastor, Jackson Baptist Church, Sylvania, Georgia, offered the following prayer:

Lord, I thank You that You allow me the great privilege and opportunity to speak to You, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Lord, I know based on Your word that You respond favorably to those who obey You. Therefore, Lord, I ask that even now You might deal with all those in this House on the urgency of that obedience. Lord, we as a Nation face challenges in the days ahead, problems we have brought on ourselves because many have forgotten whose Nation we are.

Lord, help all to understand that the Earth does not just quake, that fires do not just burn, that the storms do not just show up, but that all are under the control of You, an awesome God who will be heard. Lord, that we might understand that it is not knowledge which is the opinion of man but wisdom which is the gift of God that needs to prevail here in this place this day and every day. Convict those who so foolishly overlook the guidance that You so wonderfully and generously offer. Deal with us now individually

and collectively, that our hearts' desire might be Your desire, that our will might be given over to do Your will, that we would only think and say and do those things that we are led to do by You. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BRADY of Texas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 923. An act to amend the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 to allow certain premier certified lenders to elect to maintain an alternative loss reserve.

H.R. 3104. An act to provide for the establishment of separate campaign medals to be awarded to members of the uniformed services who participate in Operation Enduring Freedom and to members of the uniformed services who participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

WELCOMING THE REVEREND PETE WALL

(Mr. BURNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the guest chaplain for today. The Reverend Pete Wall is the pastor of Jackson Baptist Church in rural Screven County, Georgia. It is my home church in my home community. It was the church of my father and my grandfather. It is just across the road from our family farm. As my colleagues might imagine, this church and the community that surrounds it has been a guiding force in my life and is dear to my heart.

We rarely call him "Reverend" at home. It is just "Brother Pete." Pete Wall is a shepherd, both literally and figuratively. He is widely known for his knowledge of livestock, especially sheep. But he is more widely known and loved for his ministry to others. Pete has a shepherd's heart. He cares for his flock. His homespun wisdom and amazing storytelling ability easily wins friends and disarms those who might be put off by a more formal religion or a typical preacher. He has a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ, and he lives it every day. Pete readily shares his faith with those who wish to learn about a Christ-centered life, yet he never forces his views on others.

Pete has been a blessing to our church and our community for 7 years. It has been a great joy in my life to know him, his wife, Gina, and their family.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor and privilege to have the Reverend Pete Wall as our guest chaplain today. He is my pastor, he is my friend, but most importantly he is my brother in Christ.

COURT MARTIAL OF SPECIALIST JEREMY SIVITS

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, today the United States proved that we are a

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Nation of laws and a Nation of justice. In Baghdad, Army Specialist Jeremy Sivits pleaded guilty to three charges surrounding his mistreatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison. The judge in the case sentenced him to confinement for 1 year, reduced his rank to private, and gave him a dishonorable discharge from the Army. Three other soldiers have appeared for arraignment of charges regarding their roles in these incidents.

While the outrage over the abuses at the prison are justified, I am hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that we will see greater justice for those murderers who committed the disgusting, vile act in the killing of American civilian Nick Berg. I hope the Iraqis and the Arab world realize that law and justice are universal values for all nations.

THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ECONOMY: WORSE OFF UNDER BUSH

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I look back to the year 2000 and I see a different country from the one we live in today. In 2000, we entered a new century having enjoyed a decade of unprecedented economic growth. During the 1990s we got our priorities together, erased the Federal budget deficit, and put in place the fiscal discipline that created a \$5.6 trillion surplus. That \$5.6 trillion surplus gave us the ability to tackle problems and ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

The election of President Bush, however, ushered in a new era of misguided priorities that have failed. Without a doubt, our country is worse off now than it was 4 years ago. We stand now, this administration has taken that \$5.6 trillion surplus and turned it into \$4 trillion of red ink. Their insistence on tax cuts we cannot afford has starved our States, forcing them to cut countless services. We have lost 2.8 million jobs, most of them in manufacturing. Today, 44 million Americans are uninsured. We have an administration that cuts people from overtime pay and prohibits lifesaving stem cell research.

Mr. Speaker, this administration's track record shows a derailment. The American people deserve a stable economy and a reliable health care system.

SENIORS BENEFIT FROM MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, since May 3, the first day that seniors could sign up for a Medicare prescription drug discount card, I have had the opportunity to hold workshops at senior centers in Smyrna, Cedartown, Rome,

Cartersville, Talbotton, and Thomaston, all cities in Georgia's 11th Congressional District.

Here is what I tell the people at these town hall meetings: call 1-800-Medicare, everybody can do that, or visit www.medicare.gov on the Web and find out which card will save you the most money and sign up ASAP. It is that simple. All the naysayers want to convince seniors that signing up for the card is too confusing or will not save them any money. I cannot think of any reason why any senior should not sign up for the card.

Beneficiaries with incomes of less than \$12,000 for an individual or \$16,000 for a couple, they get \$600 in addition to the discount on the card. That is a total of almost \$20 million in additional help for 16,500 seniors in Georgia's 11th District for 2004 and 2005.

Yes, we have already seen the power of market forces at work. The prices are coming down, and it is not by government price controls. For seniors who have struggled to buy drugs, they certainly are better off now than they were 4 years ago.

ARE WE BETTER OFF TODAY THAN WE WERE 4 YEARS AGO?

(Mr. ROSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? Let us look at the facts.

Three years ago, our country was thriving. We were running on a \$236 billion budget surplus and 22 million jobs were created between 1992 and 2000. However, today 9 million Americans are out of work and 44 million Americans are without health insurance. Gas prices are at a 23-year high, and household income has decreased by almost \$1,500. We have the largest budget deficit ever for the second year in a row in our Nation's history. Our government spends \$900,000 more a minute than it takes in, and it borrows \$1.1 billion a day. Corporate profits are up, but wages for working families are down. It is the most anemic growth since World War II.

So are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? I think it is easy to see the answer is clearly "no."

KERRY'S NEW SLOGAN—ARE YOU BETTER OFF NOW THAN 4 YEARS AGO?

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, here they go again. Candidate KERRY and the Democrats are trying to take a page out of President Reagan's handbook. Unfortunately, for the taxpayers, it is not a page dealing with tax relief. KERRY's consultants are telling Democrats to ask this question: Are you better off now than you were 4 years ago?

Four years ago under a different administration, this Nation slept while al Qaeda plotted. We were deceived by a hollow technology bubble. Our seniors had no assistance with prescription drugs. And 4 years ago, Americans paid a marriage tax, a death tax, an estate tax, and across the board Americans paid higher income taxes.

President Bush has led us through some of the most challenging times in our Nation's history. Our economy is growing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month. More Americans are working than ever. More Americans own a home than ever. Our Armed Forces have terrorists on the run.

In Candidate KERRY's world, we would treat terrorism as a law enforcement issue. Mr. Speaker, I think those advisers need to go back to the drawing board.

ECONOMIC INDICATOR?

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, on April 24, President Bush visited the Timken Company, a plant in Canton, Ohio. He touted there his economic program and his tax cuts. Just the other day in Timken, Ohio, they closed the plant, firing 1,300 employees.

The President went on to say on his visit that his tax cut would end the double taxation of stock dividends which would mean, and I quote the President, "companies like Timken have got a better capacity to expand, more jobs." He went on to say, "We can do whatever it takes to overcome the obstacles in our way. I know you're optimistic about the future of this company."

Three tax cuts, \$3 trillion in debt, 3 more million Americans without jobs, 3 more million Americans in poverty since he has been President, and 43 million uninsured Americans. I am not sure we can afford this much progress in America. After announcing his tax cut in Timken, Ohio, the other day, just 2 days ago, the executive closed the plant firing 1,300 workers.

We can do better. There is a new direction in America that puts working families at the center of our economic policies rather than dividend tax cuts for contributors who support the President's reelection.

MESSAGE TO TROOPS: WE ARE WITH YOU

(Mr. BRADY of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Abu Ghraib prison guards in Iraq betrayed their fellow soldiers and our Nation with their indefensible acts. But this past week in Washington watching some Members of the House and Senate exploit this behavior to degrade our entire military and just